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ABSTRACT

School bus driver behavior and motivation are continuing concerns for leaders/administrators in the field of transportation. Motivation begins with selection of a potential new driver. Drivers must like children and be patient, loyal, and punctual. The applicant's background must be verified, in view of the national concern for child safety. Motivation begins from the moment an application from a potential new driver is accepted. Good communication is essential, and a driver's manual is the best tool for establishing procedures, rules, and regulations and providing the direction necessary for a consistent operation. One can never spend too much time in driver training, and quality instructors for driver training and safety programs are the key to maintaining a safe, effective, and efficient transportation system. Continuous driver education and information is a priority. A good supervisor becomes involved with drivers, since his/her involvement motivates them. Of the many duties and responsibilities of a school bus driver, human relations skills are very important. (YLB)

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DRIVER BEHAVIOR AND MOTIVATION

Driver behavior and motivation is a continuing process. It never stops. To achieve the best we must be involved at all levels of administration. It's only as good as we want it to be. We must be actively involved and participating. The degree of involvement and participation varies according to position. Whatever the degree of participation is, it must be felt all the way down the ladder. It is up to each of us to stimulate, motivate and support in order to achieve success. The strength of our drivers program depends on each of us!

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DRIVER MOTIVATION & EDUCATION

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We are here with a common goal and purpose in mind, personally and professionally, to make our operations a better one. We are sharing experiences and ideas. The service we provide is like no other. The wonderful world of school bus transportation. Its challenging, its exhausting and its rewarding. It can be perfect one minute and chaotic the next. Where else could we possibly experience so many highs and lows in one day? The "Challenge of Transportation," never ends.

We are taking good systems making them better trying to be best. We are all striving for "Good, Better, Best." Dr. Edwards, an elderly retired black woman was brought up with this concept in mind. "Its never good enough until your good is better and your better is best."

This concept used in our personal lives would certainly benefit us, but implement it in our professional lives and the skys the limit. This is our job, our responsibility and hopefully our goal, to be the best. How do we achieve and maintain our goal? We, the Directors, the Supervisors and the Administrators are the key. We must motivate, influence and stimulate.

An article I've taken from the N.A.P.T. Newsletter goes like this:

"Nobody But Nobody"

A while back, heard an organization had a very important task to perform. This is what happened - Everybody thought Somebody would do it. Anybody could do it. Somebody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Everybody was upset about Nobody doing it because it was Somebody's job to do it. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody thought Somebody wouldn't do it.

As it turned out, Everybody blamed Somebody for not doing it. Nobody, blamed Anybody,and yet it was Everybody's fault. This will never happen in A.S.B.O. because Everybody helps Anybody, and Nobody is waiting for Somebody. Nobody is blamed for not helping Somebody and Everybody gets the job done. Don't you agree? Could that happen to us or is it comparable to the 5 o'clock resurrection? People who do not believe that the dead come to life should be here at quitting time.

As the leaders of our organizations we have to prevent it. Our field is Transportation and in order to keep those wheels turning we must motivate or 'motorvate." its not the key in the ignition that keeps those buses rolling, its you. The successful system has a strong motivator at the top. Motivation not unlike safety begins with the very first step.

As the leaders we have to be sure our drivers instructors and our mechanics are not blaming someone else for not getting the job done.

Where does motivation begin? Its from the moment that potential new driver comes through the door! Who screens the applicates, who accepts that application, who investigates that person? Does that applicant meet the physical qualifications that a bus driver needs? Do you have restrictions or are there none. Not only does he meet the physical requirements but does he appear to have the physiological requirements, is there such a thing? I'm sure you have heard many times over school bus drivers are special people, you have to be!

School bus drivers are a 'Special Breed,' says veteran of 22 years from Seattle. Squirt guns, flying apples, rambunctious kids, some tender moments and 'safety first and always" is waht the nations school-bus drivers can expect, says a veteran of 22 years behind the wheel' of an 'old yeller."

'Boy can they let you have it with squirt guns. Sometimes they load'em with ink or bluing or cologne. You can smell beautiful for two weeks, "Helen Johnson, 59, said with a smile. She now trains other drivers in such skills as first aid care for handicapped students, maintenance, evacuation, basic driving, and child phychology in four school districts north of Seattle.

Her "students" spend 65-7o hours studing or practicing driving before they pick up their first school child. "You need to know safety inside and out. That's always first, and if you don't like kids, the job's not for you," she said. Sometimes you're a counselor, even though drivers aren't supposed to get personally involved, she points out.

You can pick out the unhappy ones. Sometimes they come to you. Bus drivers are good listeners, and kids tell them things they wouldn't tell their teachers or parents. I told the kids to trust their school counselors," she said. "You're the first school person the kids see in the morning and the last one they see at night. If you yell at them, you can blow the whole day for them." she said. School-bus drivers "are a special breed" who keep track of the equivalent of two classrooms of kids at their backs while wheeling a 36-foot bus through heavy traffic in snow and ice, she said.

"It's a tremendous responsibility to carry 66 or more children. When you go out your decisions are your own and they'd better be right,"she said. The school bus driver, she said, is sort of the front line emissary of the school district." "Parents might not know the principal, but they recognize the bus driver. Some parents set their clocks by the driver," she said.

Sometimes, misunderstandings crop up. "Usually, a driver will have a good

safety reason for reprimanding a child. I don't think parents understand that if you don't control things right away, the whole bus load will go, even the good kids, Ms. Johnson said." "Like kids. You're going to get the kind of load you expect. If you expect a good, quiet load, you'll work toward it and get it. Say what you mean and mean what you say."
Advice for kids? 'Talk to your neighbor, have a good time.....and stay in your seat."

In no other part of the education system can the selection of an employee be any more important than the school bus driver, they literally have the lives of the students in their hands. Without students their would not be a need for our educational systems.

In your driver slelection process do you look for people who like children, do they have patience? Will they be loyal and punctual? Do you check references, former employers, police departments and motor vehicle records? Are you making a serious attempt to verify the applicants background? In view of the national concern for children and the number of child abuse cases we had better be sure we can document and substantiate our employee selection procedures.

Obviously, Helen Johnson is a motivated woman. She is one of the special breed. She loves her job and she is willing to go to all lengths to protect and to perform her job duties in a professional way. Why, what is the reason she's done all these things? She has accepted her responsibility. She feels a personal achievement and satisfaction. She had recognition, growth and advancement. Someone has motivated her well.

She in turn is motivating the other drivers in that system. Motivation never stops, it is always continuing from the moment you accept the application from the potential new driver,you have to give direction. He has to know where you are coming from and where he is going. He has to know what you expect from him.

How do you handle direction? How do you communicate? The best way I know is with our drivers manual. Its the best tool we have. We update our manual yearly and the drivers sign for it. Everything is covered from soup to nuts and we have it documented. You've established your procedures, rules and regulations and you've provided the direction necessary for a consistant operations. In my opinion it is the strongest and best tool available. With this manual you are educating your drivers with consistency to meet the needs of your system. It also can be a mechanism to build trust. Trust is important, you have to believe in your people and they should believe in you.

Benefits of a Manual

You have in writing the best tool of communication. It is direction in its finest form. If you don't have one, seriously consider it. Base it on the needs of your department with the goals and ideas you have in mind. Naturally make sure it's not in conflict with contract agreements. Include your directives on safety, discipline, accidents, evacuation procedures and driver responsibilities.

You are informing your drives what you expect from them. They know where your coming from. Include articles such as what to do in case of an accident, emergency telephone numbers, what to do in case of a breakdown, vehicle info, personal injuries. Include information on early detection of bus defects possibly eliminating an on the road breakdown. School calendars, school times

what preventable accidents are? Special instructions for riders - special kindergarten info - how to use a lift - proper procedure in handling wheel chairs. Anything necessary to achieve a safe, efficient and effective transportation system can be included in this manual.

Utilize and select the most responsible and professional people availabe to you. Stimulate them, motivate them to perform and produce for you. It doesn't just happen its up to you to train and educate them toward your goal. You have to have motivation too - you to have to have purpose. What is motivation without a purpose.

Purpose

Remember you're the leader, its up to you. Without purpose without motivation without cause what do you have - burnout. Lets define purpose, motivation and educating.

Purpose

The object toward which one strives or for which something exists, goal. A result or effect that is intended or desired, intention, deliberately: intentionally to intend or resolve to perform or accomplish.

Motivation

Motive, reason, cause, driving force, provacation, object.

Education

Schooling, training, instruction, teaching, learning, information, knowledge, mental development

How do we accomplish this?

Involvement, recognition and awards. Its up to each of us to be productive and involved, our attitudes do filter through. A letter in the file commending a driver for a job well done. Public recognition through the Media, Board Recognition, Safe Driving Awards. Participation through competition, rodeos, fuel economy, lowest vehicle maintenance costs, whatever works in your operation. What about Safety Committees and Accident Review Boards with drivers? Do you have driver improvement programs? What type of a driver training program do you have? Does it include:

Classroom Instruction:

A history of school buses, introduction to your system, size of your fleet, the different types of vehicles and their use, the miles you travel, the schools you service, what requirements you must have to acquire a school bus license, what the costs are, or do you pay all licensing fees? Do you include Motor Vehicle Laws and behind the wheel? Do you spend enough time training?

8 hours - 2 days - 2 weeks

You can never spend too much time in driving training. It is an on going process. The same is true for instructors. What training have they had? Is it advanced, comprehensive and practical. You must have quality instructors for your Driver Training & Safety Programs. It is the key to maintaining a safe - effective and efficient transportation system.

Do you use films, showing the would be driver what the role of a bus driver entails? Do you include the pretrip inspection report? Do you place emphasis on the various sizes of a vehicle, weight, height and length and width? Do you include information on the safety equipment and how to use it? Do you give information and instruction on the mechanical operations - what the garage expects from the driver, how to report mechanical problems.

Instruction on:

Fueling procedures

R R Crossings

Discipline

Loading and Unloading

Bus Evacuations

Basic Driving Skills and Maneuvers

Use of Mirrors - use of Clutch and Brakes

Braking Skills and Downshifting

Do you have scheduled safety programs and films - informal discussions

Do you retrain as necessary?

Do you keep your drivers aware and updated on laws, rules and regulations that effect them? Is driver education and safety a point of strength in your operations? What about special education and handicapped students or pre schoolers. What training do these drivers have? Ramps - lifts - wheelchairs - lap belts - car seats - restraints - are the drivers prepared, have you given proper instructions? Do they meet the needs and requirements of your system? Did you see to it?

This is our responsibility. We are the leaders and motivators of our department. If we slip, so does our system. Continuous driver education and information is a priority and rightfully so! Coordinate support and encourage driver participation through:

Accident Review Boards

Safety Committees

Driver Input & Ideas

Rodeos - Driver Competition

Be involved and aware and knowledgeable of whats going on with your drivers. Keep a competitive spirit alive. Be in touch, your involvement does motivate.

Being in touch is being able to share and understand. I'm going to share this with you.

Dear Miss Landers:

I wish you would print this piece of nonfiction. I realize it will bring many a school bus driver to tears, but perhaps it will make the public more aware of the school bus driver's plight. I will call it:

Requiem For A School Bus Driver

First stop: It's 7:30 a.m.: "Driver, you're late." "Yes, ma'am. What time do you have?" "I don't have a watch, but I've been standing here a long time." "Yes ma'am."

Second stop: "Driver, can you wait for my brother? Mom says you're early."

Third Stop: Driver, why can't you pick up my child on the other side of the street?" Well, for one thing I'd be going in the wrong direction."

Fourth stop: "Driver, why are those kids standing up?" They won't stay seated." Yell at them. That's your job. "Yes, ma'am"

Fifth stop: "Hey, you! What's the idea of yelling at my kid?" "Well, sir, he had a little girl by the throat. She was turning blue." She deserved it she called my son a creep."

Sixth stop: "Driver, can't you come a half hour later? I have to make breakfast for my husband." No, ma'am, then I'd be late." Can't you change your schedule?" "Bye ma'am."

Between Sixth and Seventh stops: "Driver, Mary threw up all over my coat."

Into School: "How many kids you got?" "Seventy." "Principal wants to see you." "Hello, Mr. Principal." "I got a call from the president of the PTA, and she said you ran a stop sign on Fourth St." I don't go near Fourth St." "She took your bus number. Look." "Sir, you've got five numbers written down and my bus has only three. "Oh"

Driver endures two more trips in the a.m., two more at noon, and three more in the P.M. finished. Parks bus.

"Hello, dispatcher." "Got a call you were speeding on Tenth St. and almost hit a dog." "I wasn't speeding." "Got your bus number. Look." "Hooray for the dog." He got the bus number right." Boss wants to see you." "Okay."

"Hello, boss, "You're fired. You didn't pass your annual physical. Something about high blood pressure and nerves.

Understanding what a bus driver is all about is not an easy task either. As an information point I'd like to ask how many of you wonderful people have ever driven a school bus? I'd like to suggest that perhaps you should. There are many faces to a school bus driver.

Mother or Father - Jimmy, button your coat and tie your shoe before you trip.

Nurse - Jonny, here's a tissue, wipe your nose and tell your mother you don't feel well.

Teacher - Fayann, I've told you thats no way to board the bus - I've taught you responsible and reasonable student behavior on the school bus - think about what you are doing.

Chauffer - I'm sorry Mrs. Smith I can't drop Terry in front of your house. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jones want me to drop Carrie and Annie off in front of their houses too - they live 50' apart.

Custodian - They have to clean their buses.

Fuel Attendant - They have to gas them and oil them and maybe even be a mechanic from time to time. In transportation we must not forget about our mechanics. They to need education and motivation.

They're a Traffic Controller - What other form of vehicle can regulate traffic. Those little lights on top are saying stop or go, and they are the biggest form

of Public Relations you have going for you. Heaven help you if you have a driver making bad judgements and critical errors in driving and in handling students. Your phone is going to ring off the hook.

ASK - A - S - K

ATTITUDES - SKILL - KNOWLEDGE

Do you encourage drivers to develope better attitudes towards driving and handling students to increase knowledge and driving skills? Are you motivating your drivers to be better drivers and to "think about what they're doing when they're behind the wheel?"

Become involved with your drivers. Your involvement does motivate them and do it in a positive way - negative actions and reactions usually take a toll on you as well as your driver - you didn't fuel your bus, you were late for your stops, you gave the principal a hard time and slammed the door in a mother's face. If this was a good driver and they did all those wrong things there was a reason for it, probably a good cause, in the drivers mind. Maybe the bus wasn't fixed properly - the bus broke down 3 days in a row for the same thing. "Cause, Reason, and Provacation." The driver became so provoked she failed to react reasonably. A good supervisor or your dispatcher is going to recognize this. Being in touch - in contact and involved pays off.

You and your subordinates must react reasonably and responsibly and have the ability to recognize and respond to any problem before it becomes a serious and potentially dangerous situation. In understanding the many duties and responsibilities of a school bus driver there is one very important aspec to remember.

Human relation skills. The drivers that know their students, who say good morning who are responsive and involved, who are interacting, they are your true professionals. They are the ones you can truly count and depend on.

The importance of the human relation aspect is one we do not stress enough - not only for the drivers but quite possibly ourselves as well.

So lets get to it!

Do you know what a tuit is? This is a tuit.

At long last, we have sufficient quantity for you to have one of your own. Guard it with your life! These tuits are hard to come by - especially the round ones! For years you've been saying "I'll do that as soon as I get a round to it" Now that you have a round tuit of your own, many things that you meant to do just may get done!

So get tuit!

Driver motivation and education is up to us.

In closing I would like to leave you with this thought in mind.

"It is never good enough till your good is better and your better is best."

END

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